The horoscope is all the more satisfactory if the astragalus of the sheep is in the positive position, showing that the chiefs are happy and prosperous. At harvest time, Kafir corn is subject to the luma taboo, as explained in detail in a preceding chapter. All these rites prove the antiquity of the cereal. 243 787

The *sorghum*, (*maphila*, plur. of phila, dji-ma), is also extensively cultivated all through Thongaland. There are many kinds of sorghum : the *phila* proper, with reddish and white grains, the *timba*, whose stem has a sweet taste and is enjoyed almost as much as sugar cane, the *shikombe*, whose ears are curved, the *ntjyaka*, with a particularly elongated ear and the *djabana* with white seeds. The last has a somewhat bitter taste and is consequently spared by the birds, which are so fond of the other kinds of cereals that people have to stay in their gardens for months together to scare them away. 243

Rice (*mpunga*, mu-mi) is met with in a few districts only, notably on the Lower Nkomati, where the tide provides a natural irrigation, and in some depressions of the coast belt, especially near Rikatla. I could not say when it was introduced amongst the Thongas. In Shiluvane, its cultivation was entirely unknown in 1890, when it was brought thither by Lourenço Marques Natives. However a storekeeper told me that rice had been extensively cultivated in the country between 1870 and 1880. As it is subject to certain taboos (see later on) it may be that it is older than one would at first suspect.

In some places another cereal is cultivated, the *likoro* (probably Eleusine indica).

II. *Vegetables.*

Three Leguminosae play a considerable part in the feeding of the tribe : the ground nut, Kafir pea and Kafir bean. 244

a) The ground-nut, (Arachis hypogea), (rumane plur. marumane or timumane (1) (Ro.), timanga (Dj.), is extensively cultivated,

(1) Rumane (cl. dji-ma) can form its plural either by prefixing *ma* which is the regular way, or by prefixing *tin*, which is exceptional. In the second case, the *n* of the prefix causes the initial *r* to permute into *n*.

244 being of every day use in the Thonga culinary art, in which it provides the fatty principles. This curious Papillonacea, after having blossomed, elongates the peduncle of the flower, which enters the ground, and the seed grows in the soil, well protected against the rays of the sun. Its taste is delicious, either prepared
[754] as a sauce to season mealie flour, or roasted. When there are no nuts inside the shells, which often happens, Thongas call the empty shells *mabvobo*. They say: "The ground nuts have refused" — "Ma yalile marumane." But this is a euphemism. They mean that the *baloyi*, the wizards, have refused to let them grow or, rather, have stolen them from their shells during the night (See Part VI).

244 *b)* Another Leguminosa frequently cultivated is the *nyume*
824 (yi-tin (Ro.), *ndlowu*, yi-tin, (Dj.), the *Kafir pea*. This also grows in the earth, like the ground nut. It is much coarser than the European pea, but is twice or three times as large and very nourishing. This vegetable is subject to very curious taboos amongst the Rongas. Whilst all other seeds are sown in one and the same garden, this must be planted in a separate patch, and the tinyume field must be shut off from the others by a fence of thorns. Men
[753] are allowed to plant them, but, as soon as they have grown a little, only women can enter the field. Should a man imprudently do so, he would transgress a severe taboo. The danger is twofold: firstly the man himself would be punished; he would get a hydrocele. But the owners of the field would also suffer: the crops would fail. They would reproach the transgressor with these words: "You have taken away (hungula) the strength of our peas!" In order to prevent any such mischance, the husband of the woman who owns the field goes and treats (daha) it in the following manner: he throws his assagay across the field, in the direction of the four cardinal points. Then the danger is removed and men can pass through the plot. It might be supposed that this taboo was of the same kind as that which rested on bananas, for instance, when they were still new in the country and feared on that account. But it would not seem that the Kafir pea is a recent innovation in Thonga agriculture. It has been known for a long time. Another taboo in connection with Kafir peas is this:

during the first year of her married life a woman is not allowed to plant them. 244 824

Amongst the Ba-Pedi of the Transvaal the planting of Kafir peas is taboo. They are said to prevent rain and to cause intense and injurious heat.

c) The Kafir bean, mbawen, yi-tin, (Ro.), nyawa, yi-tin, (Dj.), is a small round brownish seed, with a pleasant flavour, eaten either green or dry. I do not know of any taboo in regard to it. 244

Vegetables of other families also contribute to the food of the Thongas.

Sweet potatoes (nhlata, mu-mi) cultivated either in the sand of the hills or in the richer nyaka of the marshes, are a great resource, especially when they are farinaceous and not too watery. Their leaves (matsimbo) are also used as a vegetable.

Pumpkins also constitute one of the chief articles of diet of the Blacks, from one end of Africa to the other. They are of several kinds : the *ranga* (dji-ma) and *gawana* (dji-ma) of medium size, the *shilutana*, small, sometimes pear-shaped, the *khalabatla* (djima), huge water melons, with white or pink pulp and black pips, which are eaten both cooked and uncooked. Pumpkins are not grown for their fruit alone, as the leaves of certain kinds, especially the ranga, are excellent eating, and make a very good substitute for spinach. The flowers also are greatly appreciated by the Natives. Some kinds of pumpkins are used to make gourds and calabashes. (See I. p. 50.) 415 824

There are some taboos to be mentioned in connection with the *ranga*, which seems to be the oldest kind of pumpkin known to the Bantus (1). We have seen (I. p. 184) that girls are not allowed to walk amongst the leaves and must take special precautions when plucking them. It is taboo to plant any kind of pumpkin before the Chief and the sub-chief. They are subject to the law of hierarchy in the same way as Kafir corn. The prohibition is so conscientiously observed that, should an old man keep the people waiting and be too slow in planting his 244 753 824

(1) See in Meinhof, *Grundriss einer Lautlehre der Bantusprachen*, p. 183, the different forms of this word, which was *langa* in Ur-Bantu. Compare Torrend, *Comparative Grammar of the South African Languages*, p. 89.

244 pumpkins, another will go to the field and plant some seeds in
753 it without the old man's knowledge ; then people will venture to
824 plant in their own gardens. Transgression of this taboo is said to be punished by lumbago.

222 There are, besides, many wild plants which the housewives
824 collect and of which they make excellent dishes : the *tjeke*, a
828 kind of Chenopodiacea, which is also used as a medicine to induce forgetfulness ; the *nkakana*, a pretty plant of the Cucurbitaceae family, which climbs up the dried stems of maize after the harvest, and of which they eat the leaves and also the pretty little oval pointed fruit.

137 *Tomatoes* (shimati) are also found growing round the villages,
285 where they propagate themselves, and seem to prosper the better the less they are cared for : the Natives take them to Lourenço Marques for sale in very original baskets made of a single palm leaf, with the follicles artistically twisted. I am unable to say when they were introduced. There is a agreeable kind of small tomato which grows wild in Khosen, about the size of a cherry.

244 Natives also cultivate a kind of *onion* (nyala, yi-tin), smaller than the European varieties, which they very much appreciate in their sauces.

249 *The sugar cane* (moba, mu-mi) is never grown in large plantations, but you find it on the Coast, as well as in Zoutpansberg, cultivated on a small scale, either for eating, or for preparing the strong *shiwayawaya* drink, which I shall describe later on.

245 The *pine-apple* (lalasi, dji-ma) has spread as far as the Bilene country and must be of ancient date ; it differs considerably from the Natal pine-apple, being longer, coarser and not so sweet. In many villages large plantations are to be seen.

249 *Tobacco* (fole, dji-ma) is also wide-spread and seems to have been cultivated for a long time. A curious fact is that its cultivation is the business of the men, and women have nothing to do with it. Amongst the Ba-Ronga it is sown first in a damp spot in the marsh, in a special little garden called *shibibi*, and, when it has grown a little, is planted out (simeka) on the hill, near the villages. When nearly ripe the lower leaves are first